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World crime trends and emerging issues and responses in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present document was prepared in accordance with the practice established by Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/18.

At the global level, data on police-recorded offences indicate that conventional crimes follow quite distinctive trends: property-related crimes have decreased considerably, violent crime has on average declined only a little and drug-related offences continue their increasing trends. At the regional level, crime trends can diverge substantially. For example, over the past decade violent crime has increased in the Americas, while declining in Asia and Europe. Levels of intentional homicide in Southern Africa and Central and South America are considerably higher than the global average, and while average global trends show decreasing homicide rates over the past decade, short-term trends are unstable or even increasing rates in several subregions. This indicates that personal insecurity associated with high homicide levels is persistent in several areas of the world.

Rates of suspected and convicted persons are higher in Europe than in Asia and in the Americas, and, everywhere, the large majority of suspects and convicts are males. Over the past decade, the share of female suspects and convicts has slowly increased in all regions, while the share of child suspects and convicts has decreased.

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While trends for those police-recorded offences regularly monitored by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), as well as for persons suspected and convicted of any criminal offence, have in many cases been of decreasing rates, the global prison population has increased in absolute numbers (10.4 million people at the end of 2012), although remaining fairly stable in proportion to the global population. From collected data, particular challenges emerge in relation to the high rates of prisoners with a non-final sentence (particularly prisoners without any sentence), the substantial proportion of prisoners who are foreign nationals; the large proportion of prisoners who have been sentenced for violent crimes and drug offences; the large proportion of recidivist prisoners; and high levels of violent deaths (suicides and homicides) among detainees.

For the first time, selected data on two important instruments of international legal cooperation (mutual legal assistance and extradition) are available to UNODC for a limited number of countries. While requests for mutual legal assistance have increased in recent years, different regional patterns emerge in terms of use of that instrument. Similarly, the use of extradition requests varies from region to region, and data available for selected countries indicate that a significant share of such requests are not granted by the States receiving those requests.

Methodological challenges and capacity constraints in improving crime and criminal justice data are discussed in document E/CN.15/2014/10.

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I. Introduction

1. The present document, prepared in accordance with the practice established by Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/18, presents the most recent information available to the Secretary-General on world crime trends and the state of criminal justice operations today.

2. The report describes global and regional trends with respect to conventional crime, short- and long-term trends for homicide and regional patterns for homicide, as well as the response of the criminal justice system. It also provides an overview of prison populations worldwide and presents newly available statistical evidence on international cooperation in criminal matters, which is the theme of the twenty-third session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

3. Statistical data presented in this report, publicly accessible on the website of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC),[1] are based on data produced by Member States as reported annually through the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems. Those data are drawn from administrative records on criminal offences, persons in formal contact with law enforcement agencies and those undergoing the successive stages of criminal justice procedures. Different legislative frameworks, diverse statistical standards and varying operational capacities can affect the quality of such data and their comparability across countries and regions. The interpretation of statistical patterns and trends should therefore be conducted with caution, and the comparisons of regions need to take into account data coverage and data quality issues. Document E/CN.15/2014/10 contains information on the methodological challenges in collecting crime and criminal justice data and the work of UNODC to improve international standards and data quality in accordance with the road map to improve the quality and availability of crime statistics (E/CN.3/2013/11), which was supported by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2013/37.

II. Global and regional trends of selected crimes

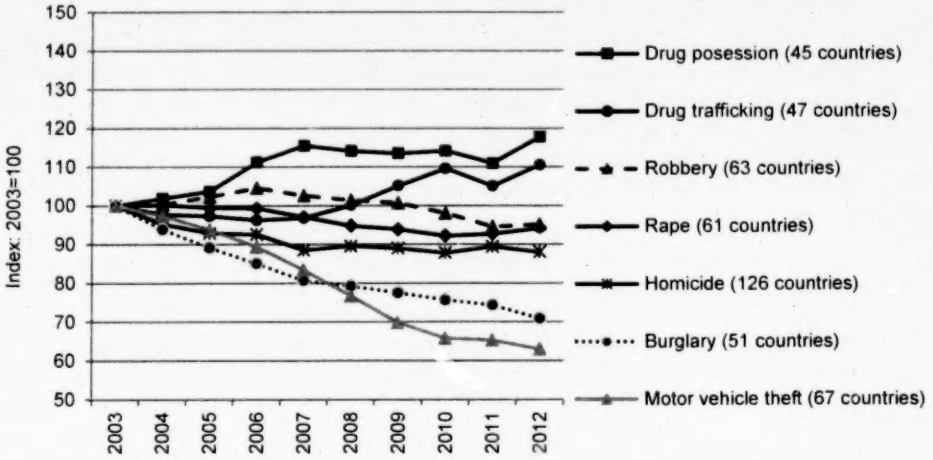
4. Data on police-recorded offences for violent crime, property-related crime and drug-related crime from 2003-2012 broadly indicate a continuation of trends that have continued since the mid-1990s.[2] Over the past decade, levels of property-related crime (burglary and motor vehicle theft) decreased, while violent crime (rape, homicide, robbery) on average declined only slightly, with diverging regional patterns. Drug-related crime trends fall into two categories: recorded levels of drug trafficking, which increased by 11 per cent from 2003 to 2012; and recorded levels

[1] Data received from Member States through the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems are available at www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime.html.

[2] Data in previous reports on world crime trends had used 1995 as the base year of the time series (see, for example, E/CN.15/2013/9). In order to substantially increase the number of countries used to compute the average trends, a more recent base year (2003) has been selected. For producing global estimates, the estimated crime rates for each region were weighted according to the region's share of the global population.

of crimes related to drug possession, which increased by 18 per cent over that period (see figure 1).[3]

Figure 1
Global trends of selected crimes, 2003-2012



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Homicide Statistics, UNODC annual report questionnaire and European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction.

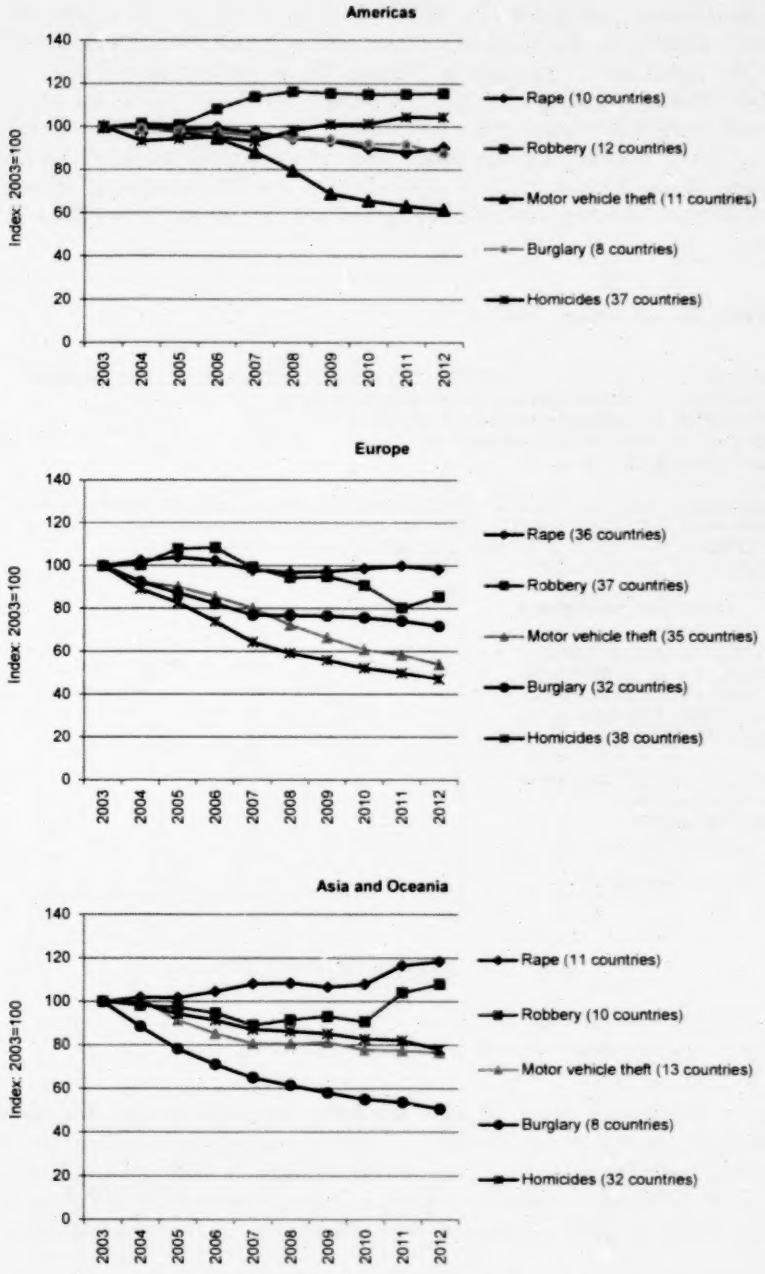
Note: Trends are calculated as weighted crime rates per 100,000 population relative to the base year 2003.

5. At the regional level, there are notable divergences in recent trends for conventional crimes.[4] While levels of property-related crimes (burglary and motor vehicle theft) decreased in all world regions, there are distinct regional trends in police-recorded violent crime. Over the past decade, recorded rape offences decreased in the Americas, while remaining at a constant level in Europe and increasing substantially in Asia and Oceania; that latter trend might partly reflect an increasing rate of reporting by victims. Nevertheless, overall, these trends show that this form of violence, which mostly affects women, is still far from being eradicated. Compared to a decade ago, levels of robbery are now higher in the Americas, Asia and Oceania, while in Europe they have slightly decreased. As a result of diverging trends at the subregional level (see section III), levels of homicides in the Americas as a whole went down in the first half of the decade and then increased steadily, reaching higher levels than at the beginning of the period. In contrast, levels of homicides declined steadily in Asia and Oceania, as well as in Europe (see figure 2).

[3] Drug possession for personal consumption refers to drug offences related to the use or the possession of drugs for personal consumption (see art. 3, para. 2, of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988). Drug trafficking refers to drug offences committed not in connection with the use or possession of drugs for personal consumption (see art. 3, para.1, of the 1988 Convention).

[4] Africa is not included in the analysis of regions owing to the lack of corresponding data.

Figure 2
Trends of selected crimes by region, 2003-2012



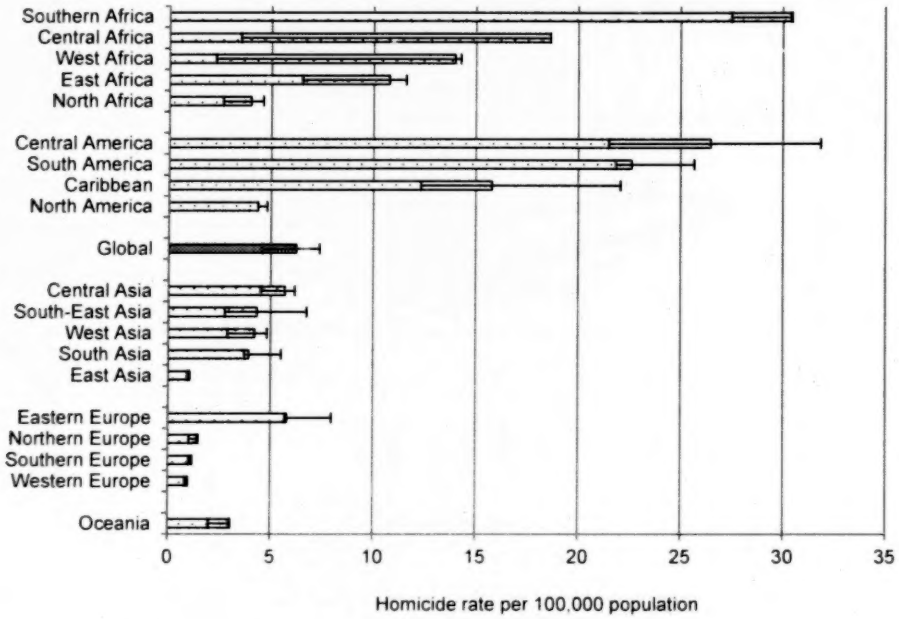
Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.

Note: Trends are calculated as weighted crime rates per 100,000 population relative to the base year 2003.

III. Levels and trends in intentional homicide

6. Intentional homicide was the cause of death of almost half a million people (439,000 individuals) worldwide in 2012. Over a third of those homicides (36 per cent) occurred in the Americas, 31 per cent in Africa, 28 per cent in Asia, 5 per cent in Europe and 0.3 per cent in Oceania. The global average homicide rate was 6.2 per 100,000 population in 2012. However, Southern Africa and Central America had average homicide rates more than four times the global average, followed by South America, Central Africa and the Caribbean, all with homicide rates between 16 and 23 per 100,000 population. In contrast, East Asia, Southern Europe and Western Europe were the subregions with the lowest homicide levels (see figure 3).

Figure 3
Homicide rate, by subregion, 2012



Source: UNODC Homicide Statistics (2013).

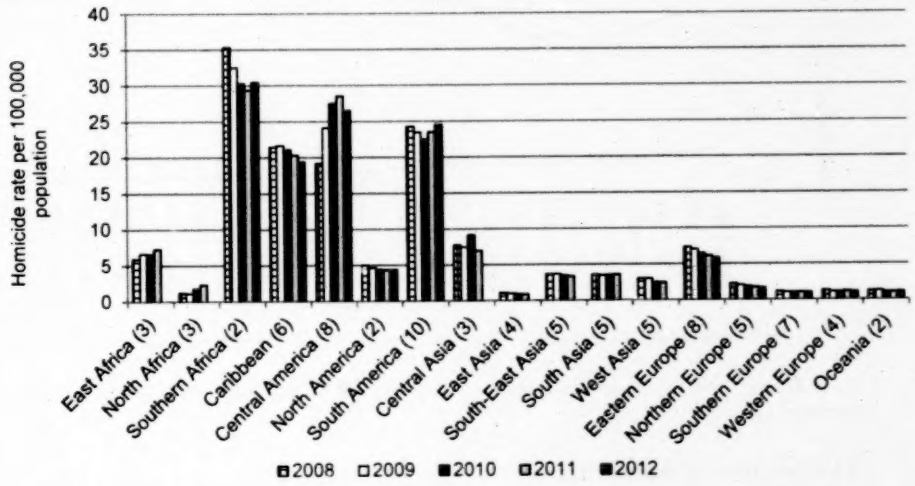
Note: Bars represent population-weighted average homicide rate, with high and low estimates.

7. Globally, in countries where data are available,[5] the trend is of a decreasing rate of homicides, but that masks diverse regional and subregional trends. Over the past five years, homicide rates have been stable in much of Asia and Oceania, as well as in much of Europe, except for a pronounced decline in Eastern Europe. In contrast, in Central America, homicide rates peaked in 2011 before declining

[5] Trend data are lacking for most countries in Africa and a number of countries in Asia and Oceania.

somewhat in 2012. Trends in homicide rates fluctuated in South America, while continuing to decrease in the Caribbean and slowly declining in North America. Based on the limited trend data available, recent homicide trends in East and North Africa have been upward. In 2012 in Southern Africa, for the first time in years, the declining trend in the homicide rate came to a halt (see figure 4).

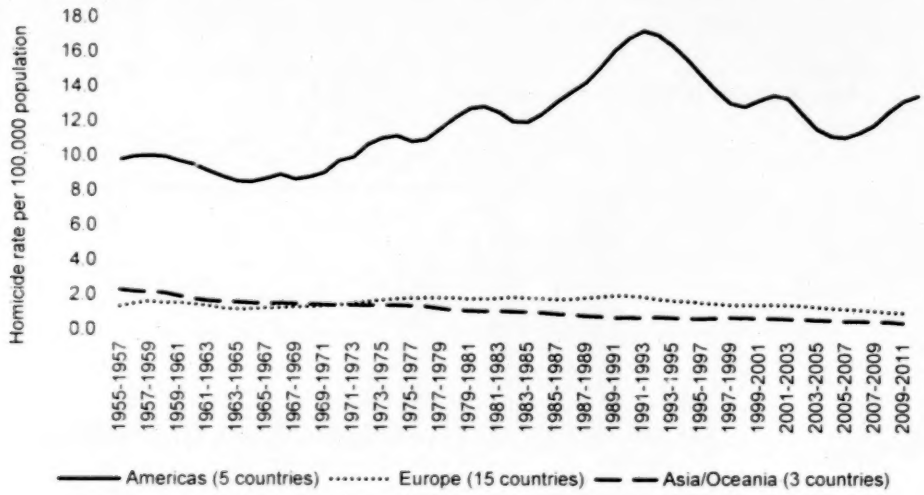
Figure 4
Recent trends in homicide by subregion, 2008-2012



Source: UNODC Homicide Statistics (2013).
Note: Number of countries included in the total for the subregion is provided in brackets.

8. To some extent, recent geographical patterns of homicide are consistent with the historical patterns. According to available trend data, there are persistently high levels of lethal violence in certain regions. This is particularly notable in some subregions of the Americas, where the current high homicide levels were preceded by a historical pattern of homicide rates that were five to eight times higher than those for Europe and Asia since the mid-1950s. At the opposite end of the spectrum, in countries with some of the lowest homicide rates in the world, mostly in Europe and East Asia, homicide levels continue to decline (see figure 5).

Figure 5
Homicide rates per 100,000 population, selected regions, 1955-2012 (three-year moving averages)

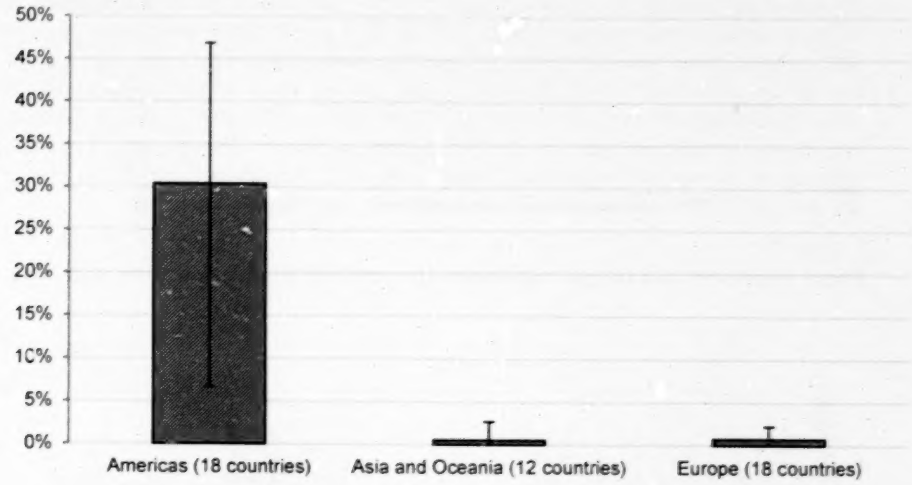


Source: UNODC Homicide Statistics (2013) and the World Health Organization Mortality Database.

The nature of homicide

9. In the Americas, particularly in Central and South America, a large share of homicides are linked to violence related to organized criminal groups and gangs. Overall, this type of homicide accounts for 30 per cent of homicides in the Americas, compared with less than 1 per cent in Asia, Europe and Oceania. Levels of organized crime/gang-related homicide can fluctuate dramatically and abruptly, while levels of homicide that is committed during the course of committing other crimes typically appear to be more stable over time, with homicide linked to robbery accounting for an average of 5 per cent of all homicides in the Americas, Europe and Oceania each year (see figure 6).

Figure 6
Percentage of total homicides involving gangs or organized criminal groups by region (2011 or latest year)



Source: UNODC Homicide Statistics (2013).

10. Intimate partner/family-related homicide accounted for 14 per cent of all homicides globally in 2012. While its intensity is greatest in the Americas, it accounts for a larger share of all homicides in Asia, Europe and Oceania, where those most at risk are women aged 30 and over. In 2012, men represented 79 per cent of all victims of intentional homicide, but for homicide committed by intimate partners or family members in 2012, two thirds of the victims worldwide were female (43,000 in 2012) and one third (20,000) male. Indeed, almost half of all female victims of homicide in 2012 (47 per cent) were killed by their intimate partners or family members, compared with less than 6 per cent of male homicide victims.

IV. Criminal justice response

11. Data on the response of the criminal justice system serve as a valuable instrument for measuring and assessing its effectiveness. Such data are usually the by-products of administrative records produced in the course of the regular activities of the main criminal justice actors (police, prosecution, courts and prison administrations) in responding to criminal events or dealing with offenders or victims.

A. Criminal justice resources

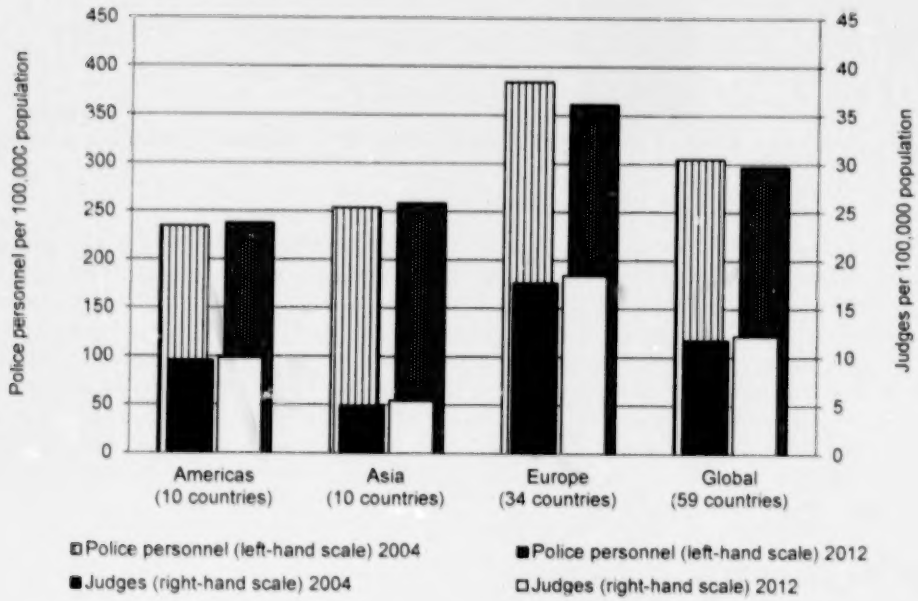
12. The capacity of the criminal justice system to respond to criminal events and deal with their consequences is determined by a number of parameters, such as the organizational and legal framework and the training, equipment and motivation of

its staff. Another important indicator is the size of the human resource base available to the criminal justice system.

13. As shown in figure 7, from 2004 to 2012, the global average rate of police personnel declined from 305 to 297 per 100,000 population, while the average rate of judges/magistrates increased from 11.7 to 12.2 per 100,000 population, meaning that in 2012 there were 24 police officers for every judge/magistrate, down from a rate of 26 police officers in 2004. In most regions, rates of police personnel and judges have been fairly stable over time, with the exceptions of a modest decline in the rate of police personnel in Europe (mainly in Eastern Europe) and a moderate increase in the rate of judges/magistrates in Asia (as well as in countries in Oceania and Africa), albeit starting from a comparatively low base in 2004.

Figure 7

Police personnel and judges/magistrates per 100,000 population, 2004 and 2012



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, 2013.

Note: The global total also includes three countries in Africa and two in Oceania.

B. Criminal justice indicators

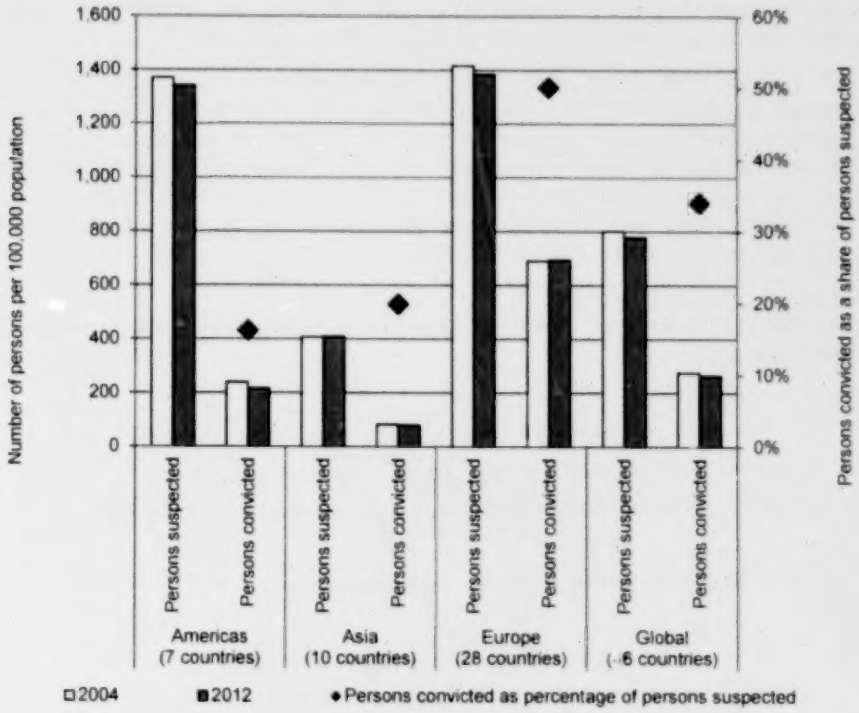
14. As shown in figure 8, on average, the rate of persons suspected[6] of any type of crime per 100,000 population is higher in Europe and the Americas than in Asia, while

[6] At the international level, different definitions and methodologies for counting persons brought into formal contact with the police or criminal justice system exist. For example, some countries count only the number of persons arrested, while others include also persons suspected or

the rate of persons convicted under national criminal law per 100,000 population is much higher in Europe than in the Americas and is lowest in Asia.[7] Taken together, the percentage of persons convicted worldwide[8] as a share of persons suspected (the "conviction rate") was 34 per cent in 2012, with large regional variations (50 per cent in Europe, 20 per cent in Asia and 16 per cent in the Americas).

Figure 8

Persons suspected and persons convicted of any type of crime, per 100,000 population, 2004 and 2012



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, 2013.

Note: The global total also includes one country in Oceania.

C. Demographic profiles

15. The great majority of all persons suspected of crime are male, but the share of female crime suspects is growing. Between 2004 and 2012, the percentage of

cautioned. In this report, the terminology "persons suspected" is used to refer to persons recorded by the police as "persons arrested, suspected or cautioned".

[7] Data on persons suspected and convicted for the Americas do not include the United States of America, as data on persons convicted at the state level are not available. Including data on persons suspected in the United States would considerably increase the average in the Americas.

[8] Based on available data from 46 countries worldwide.

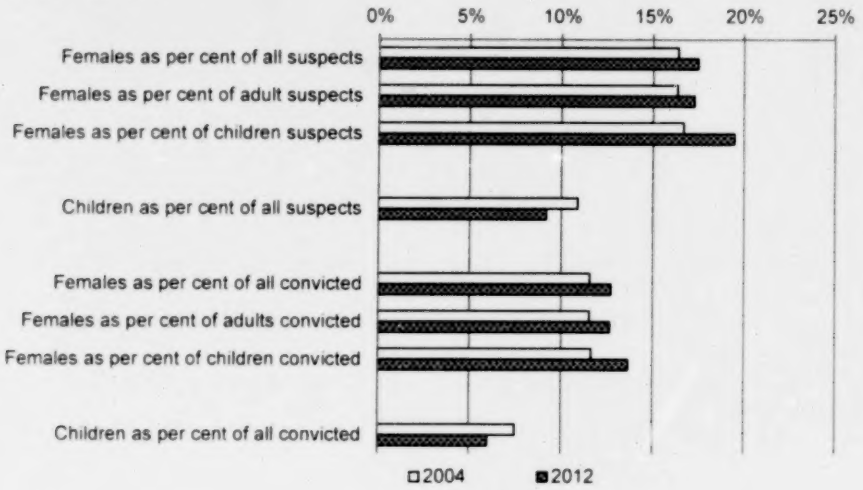
females among all persons suspected worldwide[9] increased (from 16.4 to 17.5 per cent). The share of female suspects has increased in all regions, namely from 16.9 to 18 per cent in Europe, from 16.8 to 17 per cent in Asia and from 13.8 to 16.5 per cent in the Americas. It is notable that the share of female suspects among child suspects (under 18 years of age)[10] has increased more than the share of adult suspects who are female (figure 9).

16. Women make up smaller percentages of persons convicted than of persons suspected. Worldwide, the percentage of females among all persons convicted was 12.7 per cent in 2012, up from 11.5 per cent in 2004. Similar to the case with suspected persons, the percentage of convicted children that were female increased more than the percentage of convicted adults that were female.

17. In line with a worldwide tendency to shift the response to youth delinquency outside the formal criminal justice system for adults and towards treatment in a less punitive juvenile justice system, the share of children (males and females below 18 years of age) is considerably lower among all persons convicted than among all persons suspected. Moreover, between 2004 and 2012, the share of children decreased among both suspects (from 10.9 to 9.2 per cent of all suspects) and persons convicted (from 7.5 to 6 per cent).

Figure 9

Women and children as percentage of persons suspected and persons convicted, 2004 and 2012


0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
Females as per cent of all suspects
Females as per cent of adult suspects
Females as per cent of children suspects
Children as per cent of all suspects
Females as per cent of all convicted
Females as per cent of adults convicted
Females as per cent of children convicted
Children as per cent of all convicted
2004
2012

Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.

Note: Figures are based on data from 40 countries worldwide.

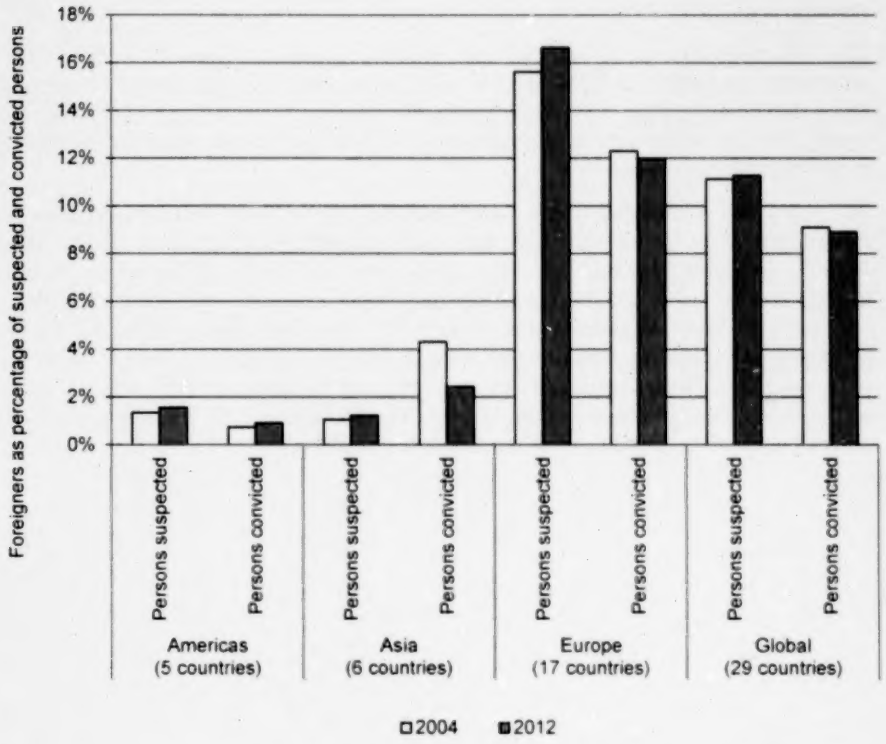
[9] Based on a sample of 40 countries worldwide.

[10] In line with article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as every human being below the age of 18 years. Some countries use different age definitions for collecting data on children suspected or convicted.

18. Although such data are less widely available, data from 29 countries indicate that the average percentage of foreigners suspected (i.e., persons who are suspected in a country other than their country of citizenship) among all persons suspected worldwide was about 11 per cent in both 2004 and 2012. There are wide regional variations with respect to that global average, with foreigners making up 16.6 per cent of all persons suspected in European countries in 2012 (up from 15.6 per cent in 2004) but only 1.6 per cent in the Americas and 1.2 per cent in Asia (see figure 10). That phenomenon is likely to be related to the higher shares of foreign residents among the population in European countries.

19. On average, foreigners make up smaller shares of persons convicted than of persons suspected. Among the 29 countries for which data are available, the share of foreigners among all persons convicted was about 9 per cent in both 2004 and 2012. The share of foreigners among all persons convicted declined both in Europe and Asia while increasing slightly in the Americas.

Figure 10
Foreigners as a percentage of suspected and convicted persons, 2004 and 2012



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.

Note: Figures are based on data from 29 countries worldwide. The global total includes one country in Africa.

V. Prison population: trends and main features

20. The use of imprisonment can be regarded as the final stage of the criminal justice process, and it can be applied to serve various objectives: retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation and incapacitation. Some criminal justice systems prioritize the retribution and incapacitation aspects, while others focus more on the rehabilitation purpose.

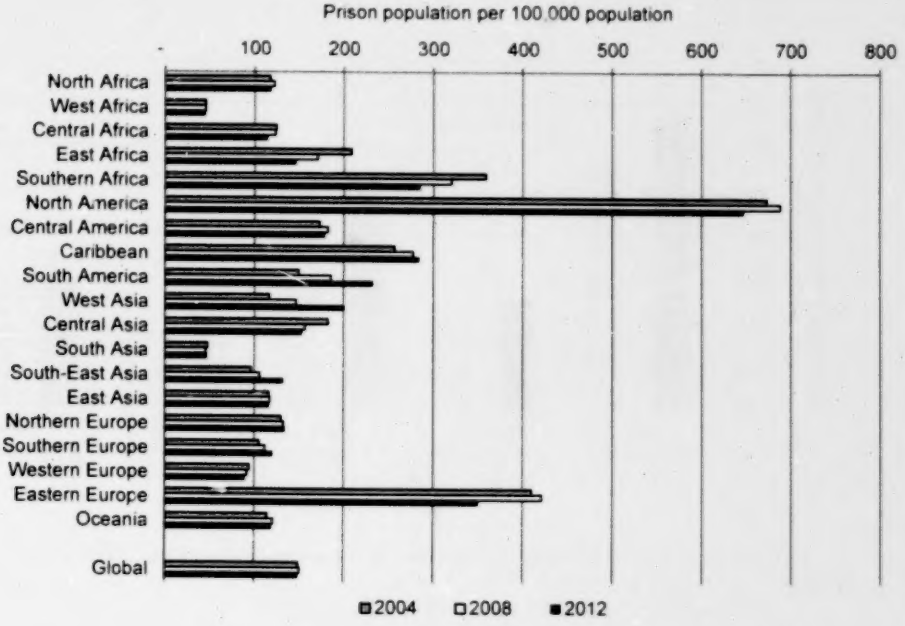
21. Worldwide, over the past decade, the global prison population has continued to grow in absolute numbers, but at a rate similar to the growth rate of the world population. But while the global rate of imprisonment is fairly stable, there are large regional variations in both the level of and trends in prison population rates. Data collected in the 2013 United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, presented in the present report, show that prison systems often face specific challenges, including, in some regions, very high rates of detainees with a non-final sentence; substantial shares of foreign nationals among prisoners; large shares of prisoners who have been sentenced for violent crimes and drug offences; the incidence of deadly violence in prisons; and high shares of recidivist prisoners, indicating the limited effectiveness of prisons as a means for rehabilitation.

22. The absolute size of the world's prison population[11] grew from 9.5 million in 2004 to 10 million in 2008 and 10.4 million in 2012, an increase of 10 per cent. Over the same period, the world population also grew by 10 per cent and, as a result, the rate of the prison population to the total population remained unchanged at 149 per 100,000 population.

23. The use of imprisonment varies substantially across different regions and subregions. With about 650 prisoners per 100,000 population in 2012, North America is the subregion with the highest rate worldwide, followed by Eastern Europe, Southern Africa, the Caribbean and South America, which had rates below 350 per 100,000 population (see figure 11). The subregions with the highest percentage increases in imprisonment rates between 2004 and 2012 were West Asia (+72 per cent), South America (+55 per cent) and South-East Asia (+38 per cent), while the largest decreases could be seen in East Africa (-30 per cent), Southern Africa (-20 per cent) and Central Asia (-16 per cent).

[11] Based on data from 181 countries worldwide, representing 99.1 per cent of the world population.

Figure 11
Total prison population per 100,000 population, 2004, 2008 and 2012



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems and the International Centre for Prison Studies.

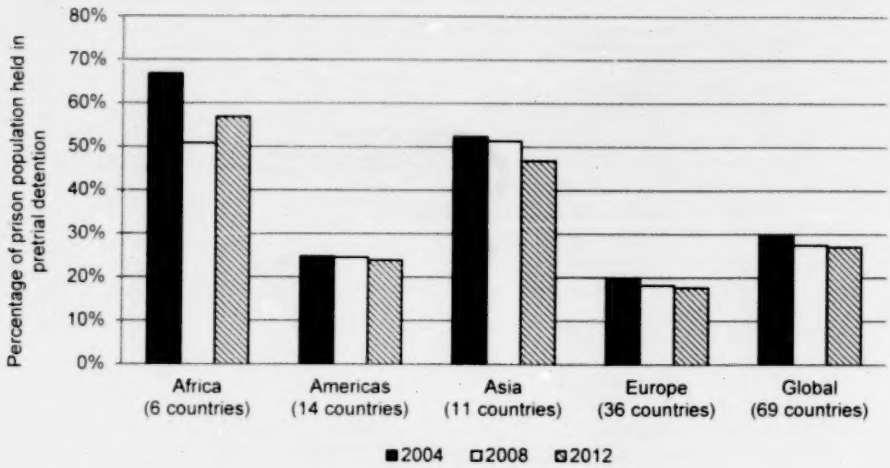
A. Prisoners without a final sentence

24. Irrespective of the total level of imprisonment, considerable shares of prison populations worldwide are awaiting trial pending further investigations or are being held during their trial or before they have received a final sentencing decision. Collectively, these persons are often referred to as pretrial or unsentenced prisoners.[12] A high share of pretrial prisoners may indicate particular challenges and capacity constraints of the criminal justice system in expeditiously investigating criminal cases and effectively adjudicating alleged offenders. As shown in figure 12, the share of persons in pretrial detention worldwide has decreased from 30 per cent in 2004 to 27 per cent in 2012. Progress has been most manifest in Africa and Asia, where the shares of pretrial prisoners decreased but remained at high levels, declining from 67 to 57 per cent in Africa and from 52 to 47 per cent in Asia. In regions with lower shares of pretrial detainees, the decrease has been less evident (in the Americas, from 25 to 24 per cent; and in Europe, from 20 to 18 per cent).

[12] For the purposes of this report, the terms are used interchangeably and refer to prisoners with a non-final sentencing status. Countries may use different definitions according to national practices and regulations.

Figure 12

Prison population in pretrial detention as a share of the total prison population, 2004, 2008 and 2012



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.

Note: The global total includes two countries from Oceania.

25. Within the broad group of prisoners without a final sentence, there are important differences in legal status. Depending on the legal systems, the overall category of pretrial/unsentenced prisoners can include persons in at least two categories and four subcategories:

(a) Persons held without any sentencing decision, including:

(i) Persons under investigation whose trial has not yet started;

(ii) Persons under trial;

(b) Persons held with a non-final sentencing decision, including:

(i) Persons who have been convicted by the court but not yet sentenced;

(ii) Persons who have been convicted and sentenced by the court but are awaiting the outcome of an appeal or who are within the statutory limits to file an appeal.

26. Particular attention should be given to the group of prisoners without any sentencing decision, in particular in view of the potential contravention of their right, under international law, to a trial within a reasonable time or to release pending trial.[13] Available data from selected countries indicate that this is the largest

[13] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (art. 9, para. 3). Similarly, rule 6, para. 1, of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules), states, with respect to the avoidance of pretrial detention: "Pretrial detention shall be used as a means of last resort in criminal proceedings, with due regard for the investigation of the alleged offence and for the protection of society and the victim".

group among the above categories of prisoners. Among 17 countries[14] worldwide, whose overall share of pretrial/unsentenced prisoners was 34 per cent, the large majority of them (85 per cent) were persons held without any sentencing decision, while the other 15 per cent were persons held with a non-final sentencing decision (for example, because they appealed a first instance decision).

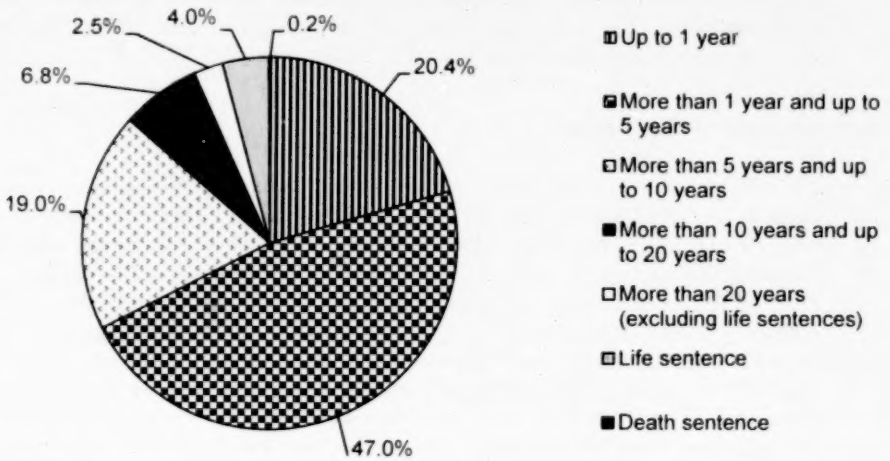
B. Length of sentences

27. The size and composition of the prison population depend on a number of factors, including the way in which the criminal justice system responds to crime (e.g. sentencing policies regulating the use of custodial sentences, conditional sentences, alternative measures and the length of sentences) and the capacity of the criminal justice system to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate offenders and other factors. Available data from 35 countries worldwide show that of the total number of persons held in prisons, penal institutions and correctional institutions in 2012, more than two thirds had received prison sentences of up to five years, while, at the other end of the spectrum, 6.5 per cent had received sentences of more than 20 years, including life sentences, and 0.2 per cent had been given death sentences (see figure 13).

28. Available data on the distribution of prisoners by the length of sentence given show a similar distribution for countries in Asia and Europe, but with a lower share of prisoners sentenced to 10 years or more in Asian countries than in European countries. Available data on a limited number of countries in Africa, the Americas and Oceania indicate a share of prisoners sentenced to 10 years or more that is significantly above the global average.

[14] Among the 17 countries with available data, 12 were from Europe, 2 from Asia, 2 from the Americas and 1 from Oceania. While the share of prisoners with a non-final sentencing decision ranged from 1 to 20 per cent, there was a much higher variability in the share of prisoners without any sentencing decision, ranging from 4 to 72 per cent of all prisoners.

Figure 13
Sentenced prisoners by length of final sentence, 2012



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, 2013.

Note: The global total includes 35 countries, of which 2 countries are in Africa, 3 in the Americas, 6 in Asia, 22 in Europe and 2 in Oceania.

C. Sentenced prisoners, by principle offence

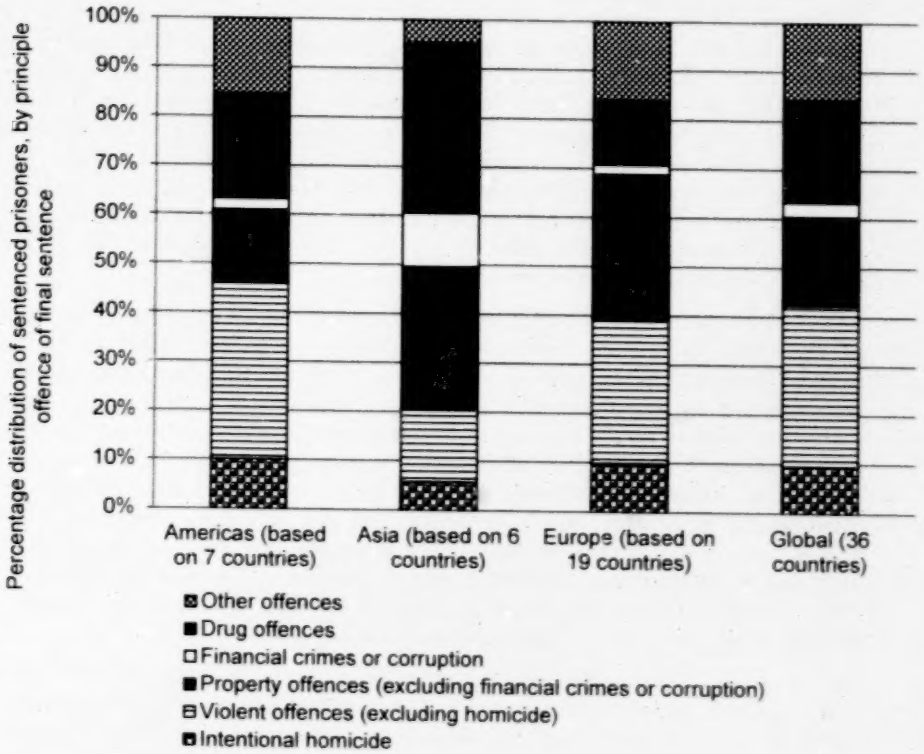
29. In all criminal justice systems, the gravity of the offence is the main determinant for the type and length of the sentence applicable to that type of crime. More serious offences (such as homicide and other violent offences) typically lead to longer prison sentences being pronounced by the court. It can therefore be expected that perpetrators of more serious offences are overrepresented among the prison population. Based on data for 36 countries worldwide, perpetrators of homicide make up 10 per cent of all sentenced prisoners (excluding unsentenced prisoners), while other violent offenders make up a further 33 per cent of sentenced prisoners. Persons convicted of property crimes (18 per cent) and financial crimes and corruption offences (3 per cent) make up smaller shares of the sentenced prison population. While there are large differences between individual countries, persons convicted for drug offences (drug possession and drug trafficking) make up 21 per cent of the sentenced prison population worldwide.[15]

30. There are notable regional differences in the share of sentenced prisoners by crime type. In the Americas, almost half of all sentenced prisoners were convicted for violent offences (10 per cent for homicide and 36 per cent for other violent

[15] Only a limited number of countries distinguish in their data between prisoners convicted of drug possession and of drug trafficking. In those countries that do distinguish between the two types of offence, eight countries have more prisoners convicted of drug trafficking than of drug possession, and three have more prisoners convicted of drug possession than of drug trafficking.

offences), compared with 40 per cent in Europe (10 and 30 per cent, respectively) and 20 per cent in Asia (6 and 15 per cent, respectively). Prisoners convicted for drug offences account for 21 per cent of all sentenced prisoners in the Americas, 35 per cent in Asia and 13 per cent in Europe, as shown in figure 14.

Figure 14
Sentenced prisoners by principle offence of final sentence, 2012



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, 2013.

Note: The global total also includes two countries in Africa and two in Oceania.

D. Recidivism of prisoners

31. A considerable share of prisoners had served custodial sentences for other crimes prior to their current prison sentence. That share[16] serves as a direct indicator of recidivism among current prison inmates. Available data for 25 countries worldwide, mostly in Europe, indicate that, on average, 29 per cent of all persons held in prison in 2012 had been in prison previously, in relation to a different sentence. Of those individuals, 95 per cent were male and 5 per cent

[16] It is calculated as the share of persons held in prisons who have previously served another prison sentence out of the total prison population.

female, which is similar to the shares of men and women in overall prison populations, indicating that the male and female re-imprisonment rates are about the same.

E. Demographics of prison populations

32. Of all persons held in prisons, penal institutions or correctional institutions in 2012, over 90 per cent were male, with only slight variations by region, ranging from 92 per cent in the Americas to 95 per cent in Africa. Over time, however, the total number of female prisoners (who constitute 5-8 per cent of the prison population) grew by 26 per cent between 2004 and 2012 — an increase far higher than that recorded for men (11 per cent). Consequently, the share of female prisoners (adult and children) among all persons detained rose from 6.5 to 7.3 per cent over the same period (see figure 15). The increase in the share of female prisoners was more pronounced in Europe (from 5.1 to 6.7 per cent), where the number of female prisoners grew by 34 per cent, while the number of male prisoners remained stable over the same period.

33. The treatment of child offenders is regulated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as international standards and norms related to juvenile justice,[17] which stipulate that the deprivation of liberty of juveniles should be a disposition of last resort, limited to exceptional circumstances and for the minimum period necessary. Overall, a reduction in the number of children deprived of liberty was observed.[18] The number of children held in prisons, penal institutions or correctional institutions worldwide decreased by 8 per cent between 2004 and 2012, bringing the percentage of all prisoners who are children down from 1.2 to 1.0 per cent. However, large variations exist at the regional level, and the substantial decreases in the number of children in prison observed in Europe (-45 per cent) and Asia (-14 per cent) were in contrast to important increases in the absolute number of children in prison in the Americas (a 69 per cent increase).

34. In many countries, foreign citizens make up a considerable share of persons held in prisons, penal institutions or correctional institutions. That phenomenon is related to various aspects of globalization such as the growing social and economic interaction between countries, rising shares of foreign workers or residents in many countries worldwide, as well as increased mobility and international tourist flows.

35. According to available data, the number of foreign prisoners grew by 21 per cent between 2004 and 2012 (compared with a 5 per cent increase for native citizens). Accordingly, the worldwide share of foreigners among prisoners increased from 5.9 per cent in 2004 to 6.7 per cent in 2012. As shown in figure 15, that share has increased in all regions. While there is a large variation among individual

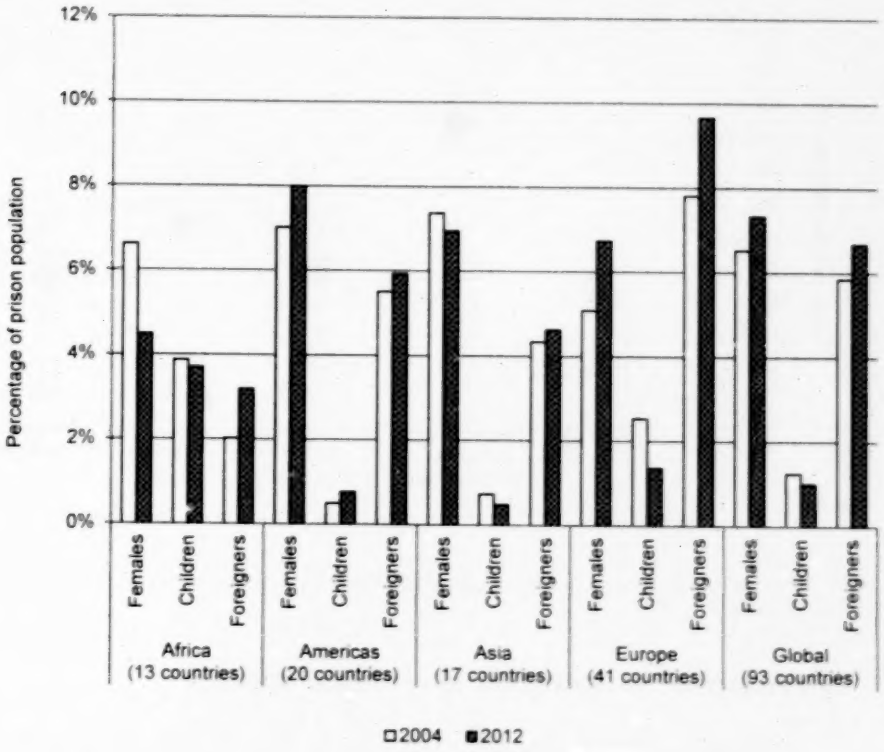
[17] These include the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines), the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules) and the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty.

[18] Between 2006 and 2011, the rate of children deprived of liberty (both in prisons, penal and correctional institutions as well as institutions outside prison administration such as closed remand homes and reform schools) has decreased from 53 to 42 per 100,000 children (or 20 per cent) worldwide (see E/CN.15/2013/9).

countries, generally the percentage of foreign citizens among the prison population is higher in regions with larger shares of foreign residents, such as Europe (9.7 per cent in 2012) and the Americas (5.9 per cent) and lower in other regions (4.6 per cent in Asia, and in 3.2 per cent in Africa).

Figure 15

Share of prison population who are female, children and foreign citizens, 2004 and 2012



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.

Note: The global total also includes two countries in Oceania.

F. Deaths in prisons

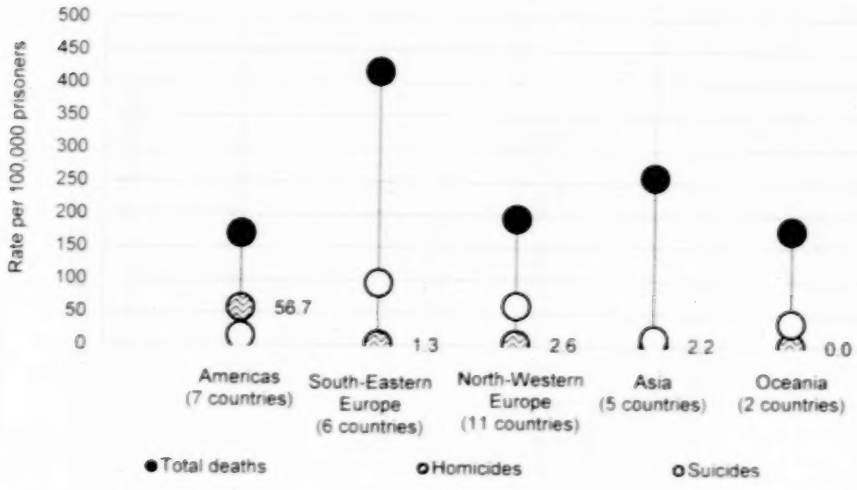
36. In accordance with international standards and norms, States have a special responsibility to ensure and respect the right to life in custodial settings.[19] Available data suggest that the mortality rate in prison settings (which includes both deaths from natural causes and those resulting from external causes) tends to be higher

[19] Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, principle 34; also see the report of the Special Rapporteur on Torture (E/CN.4/1995/34, para. 926 (g)).

than the rate for the general population. Among external causes, rates of homicide appear to be a greater problem in the Americas than in Europe, where suicide appears to be the main non-natural cause of death of inmates (see figure 16). In the seven countries in the Americas for which data are available, the homicide rate among prisoners (56.7 per 100,000 prisoners) is three times higher than the homicide rate for the general population (on average 19.1 per 100,000 population).

Figure 16

Total deaths, homicides and suicides of prisoners per 100,000 prison population, selected regions and subregions, 2012



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, 2013.

VI. International cooperation in criminal matters

37. Criminal activities increasingly cross national borders, while the principle of state sovereignty places limitations on the exercise of investigative and coercive powers of national law enforcement bodies outside of their own territory. The transnational nature of several crimes and the ease with which criminals cross national borders to escape justice has created a growing need for international cooperation in criminal matters and increasing efforts to facilitate such collaboration. A number of bilateral treaties and international conventions, including the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 2000 and the United Nations Convention against Corruption of 2003, promote such international cooperation among States parties through provisions in the areas of mutual legal assistance, extradition, joint investigations, transfer of proceeds of crime and other matters. To review progress in such cooperation, the theme chosen for the thematic discussion of the Commission's twenty-third session is "International cooperation in criminal matters", and a special module of the 2013 United Nations Survey of Crime Trends

and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems asked countries to report relevant data on mutual legal assistance and extradition.[20]

A. Mutual legal assistance

38. The term "mutual legal assistance" refers to various types of formal legal assistance given by one State to another State to support the requesting State in the criminal justice process.[21]

39. For 2012, 30 countries reported data on mutual legal assistance to UNODC, and together they recorded a total of 17,207 incoming requests for mutual legal assistance from a foreign State and 12,906 outgoing requests for mutual legal assistance to a foreign State.[22] There is a large variation in the number of such requests between countries, with some countries reporting fewer than 10 outgoing and incoming requests for mutual legal assistance and other countries reporting thousands of requests. There is no obvious relationship between the population size of the reporting countries and the number of incoming or outgoing mutual legal assistance requests, since several less populous States received and made a greater number of requests than did some very populous States.

40. According to the available trend data for 27 countries — almost half of which were countries in Europe, a quarter were countries in Asia and the remaining quarter were countries in the Americas — from 2010 to 2012, the number of recorded outgoing requests for mutual legal assistance increased by 28 per cent, while the number of incoming requests for such assistance increased by 9 per cent, illustrating a growing level of requests for mutual legal assistance across borders, with around 75 per cent of reporting States showing an increase in the number of incoming mutual legal assistance requests between 2010 and 2012.

41. Over the three-year period 2010-2012, in each of the 27 countries for which data were available, States recorded an average of approximately 600 incoming and 400 outgoing requests for mutual legal assistance per year. On average, the 13 European countries for which data are available reported a higher use of mutual legal assistance than did countries in other regions: while each of the European countries recorded on average more than 1,000 incoming and almost 700 outgoing requests for mutual legal assistance per year, in selected countries in the Americas,

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[20] In many countries, such data are routinely compiled by the Ministry of Justice or by a designated central authority responsible for international cooperation in criminal matters. Art. 18, para. 13, of the Organized Crime Convention, for example, requires States parties to designate a central authority that shall have the responsibility and power to receive requests for mutual legal assistance.

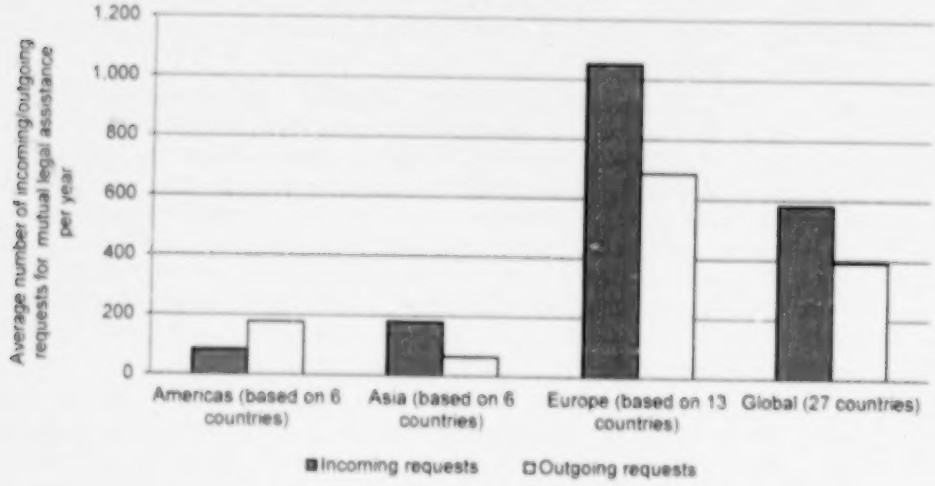
[21] "Mutual legal assistance" means assistance afforded by one State to another State in investigations, prosecutions and judicial proceedings in relation to criminal matters, including with respect to the freezing, seizing and confiscation of proceeds and instrumentalities of crime and terrorist property, irrespective of the legal basis for such assistance.

[22] The term "incoming request" refers to mutual legal assistance received by reporting States, while "outgoing request" refers to mutual legal assistance sent by the reporting State. The difference between the two aggregates is due to the fact that the data correspond to a sample of responding countries (at the global level, incoming and outgoing requests should in principle coincide) and may also be due to differences in recording practices.

Asia and Oceania reporting information, a much lower number of requests per year was recorded (see figure 17).

Figure 17

Number of incoming and outgoing requests for mutual legal assistance per country, annual average for the period 2010-2012



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, 2013.

Note: The global total also includes two countries from Oceania.

42. The acceptance or denial of a mutual legal request is dependent upon a number of factors related to the substance and the procedure of the request, and not all requests for mutual legal assistance by one State will be granted by the foreign State that is requested to afford the assistance. Available data show that States that are requested to afford international legal assistance report that the large majority of incoming requests for mutual legal assistance have been formally granted, while States record much lower acceptance rates for outgoing requests for mutual legal assistance. From available information, it is not possible to assess the reasons for such a discrepancy.

43. Based on data from 13 countries, the share of incoming requests for mutual legal assistance that were considered granted over a three-year period was as high as 90 per cent, while only 26 per cent of outgoing requests were considered granted. Between 2010 and 2012 there was a notable decline in the percentage of requests granted in those 13 countries.[23]

[23] The share of both incoming and outgoing requests that were refused (i.e. formally denied in writing by the requested State) was between 1 and 4 per cent over the years 2010 to 2012, with no clear trend.

B. Extradition

44. A second pillar of international cooperation in criminal matters is the process of extradition: the surrender of an alleged or convicted criminal by one State to another State requesting the extradition of that person for prosecution or the enforcement of a sentence.[24] In order to facilitate the lawful extradition of persons wanted in another State, many States have concluded bilateral extradition treaties with other States or are party to regional arrangements containing provisions on the extradition of persons.

45. According to available data, the use of formal extradition procedures plays a far larger role in the criminal justice process in some States than in others. Irrespective of population size, some countries send and receive far more extradition requests than others. Moreover, even when extradition requests are made, they are often not granted by the requested State. There is also significant variability in the use of extradition requests between countries and regions, with reporting European countries making more use of extradition requests, on average, than reporting countries in other regions.

46. For 2012, 35 countries reported data on extradition requests to UNODC and together recorded a total of 3,025 incoming requests for extradition and 2,010 outgoing requests for extradition (excluding requests through the European arrest warrant[25] in most European countries). There is a wide variability of extradition requests reported by countries, ranging from none to several hundred per year. Available trend data for 29 countries indicate that from 2010 to 2012, the number of incoming requests for extradition increased by 10 per cent, while the number of outgoing requests fell by 24 per cent, a decline that reflects lower numbers of outgoing extradition requests from European countries.[26]

47. Similar to the higher use of mutual legal assistance, the 15 countries in Europe reporting on extradition requests on average send and receive requests for extradition more frequently than countries in other regions. From 2010 to 2012, on average each of the 29 countries recorded 81 incoming and 65 outgoing requests for extradition per year. The 15 countries from Europe recorded on average 130 incoming and 109 outgoing requests for extradition per year (not including European arrest warrants in most countries), while 6 countries in the Americas recorded an average of 40 incoming and 15 outgoing, and 6 countries in Asia recorded an average of 14 incoming and 19 outgoing extradition requests per year (figure 18).

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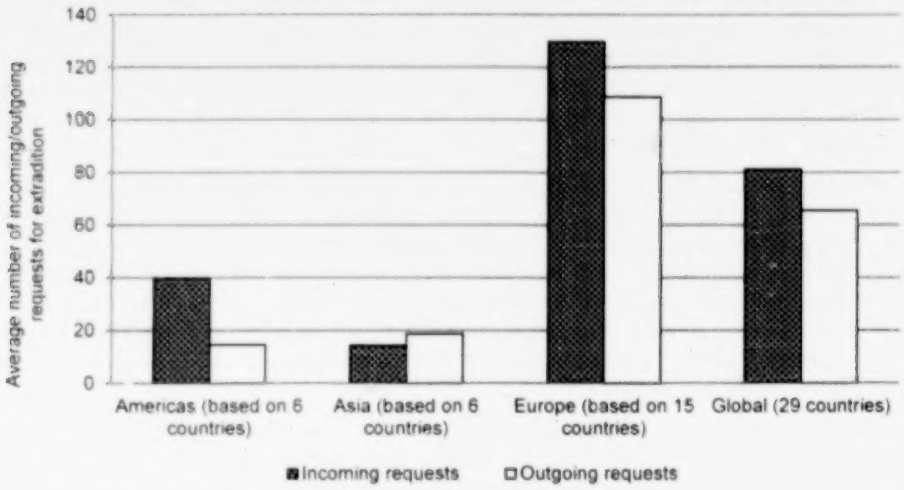
[24] In the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems for 2013, "extradition" means the decision to transfer, from one State to another, a person who is wanted in the requesting State for prosecution for an extraditable offence or for the imposition or enforcement of a sentence in respect of such an offence.

[25] The European arrest warrant system requires another Member State of the European Union to arrest and transfer a criminal suspect or sentenced person to the requesting State, for the purposes of conducting a criminal prosecution or enforcing a custodial sentence.

[26] Data on extradition requests in Europe refer mainly to non-European Union cases that are not dealt with through the European arrest warrant system, except data from Austria and Ireland, which also include European arrest warrant cases. Since its entry into force in 2004, the European arrest warrant has become the main instrument for requesting extradition within Europe.

Figure 18
Average number of incoming and outgoing requests for extradition per country, 2010-2012



Source: United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, 2013.

Note: Excluding European arrest warrant cases in most European countries. The global total includes two countries in Oceania.

48. Available data from 24 countries on the share of extradition requests granted by the requested State also indicate some large and persistent discrepancies. While on average 55 per cent of incoming extradition requests and 53 per cent of outgoing extradition requests were considered granted, there are important differences at the regional level, as shares of outgoing extradition requests not being granted in the 5 reporting countries of the Americas are higher than in the 6 reporting countries in Asia and the 11 reporting countries in Europe.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

49. Statistical data on crime and criminal justice — criminal offences, persons suspected, persons convicted, persons held in prisons — produced by Member States and reported annually through the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems are indispensable instruments for understanding crime patterns and trends and for developing evidence-based policies for crime prevention and criminal justice. Administrative data are particularly valuable for monitoring trends in the response of law enforcement and criminal justice institutions to crime. Global and regional trends relating to selected violent crimes, property crimes and drug offences also provide valuable information about the context in which national law enforcement and criminal justice actors operate and can serve as a benchmark for national policies and strategies. Yet, while data on

common crimes such as robbery and burglary are often available at the international level, there is a scarcity of comparable data on other, more complex types of crimes such as kidnapping for ransom, corruption offences, specific types of fraud, environmental crimes or offences related to organized crime or gang activities. Having a common understanding and definition of such types of crime would be a first step to measure levels and trends in such crimes. The International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes, currently being developed with the support of UNODC, will provide valuable methodological guidance on the measurement of such less common, yet increasingly important, crime types.

50. Data on police-recorded crime and the operations of the criminal justice system can capture only that part of criminal activities that come to the attention of the police. Complementary data can be obtained from crime victimization surveys that measure the experience of crime through sample surveys among the population of interest (such as the general population or businesses in a country). Victimization surveys can also provide information on crime not reported to authorities and it can provide additional data for crime prevention strategies or victim support measures. A comprehensive review of the state of statistics on crime and criminal justice is offered in the report of the Secretary-General on improving the quality and availability of statistics on crime and criminal justice for policy development (E/CN.15/2014/10).

51. The availability of information on prison systems makes it possible to identify a number of challenges faced by criminal justice systems, in particular by national prison authorities. Statistics presented in this report summarize available data on some of the salient issues, including detainees with a non-final sentence, foreign prisoners, deadly violence in prison and the incidence of recidivism among prison populations. More comprehensive analysis would be possible in an ad hoc study on the conditions of prison populations.

B. Recommendations

52. **It is recommended that the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice:**

(a) Take note of the substantial share of detainees without a final sentence and encourage Member States to monitor the use and duration of pretrial detention in order to safeguard the right of all arrested or detained persons to be tried within a reasonable time or be released and to ensure compliance with the United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems at both the pretrial and post-trial stage;

(b) Take note of the share of recidivist prisoners among the prison population and encourage Member States to monitor efforts in the field of the rehabilitation and social reintegration of offenders, including information on the outcomes of evidence-based services and programmes and the amount of resources spent on such programmes;

(c) Take note of the increasing diversity of prison populations and encourages Member States to establish comprehensive systems of statistics on prison populations that are sensitive to the special needs and vulnerabilities of

certain categories of prisoners, including, but not limited to, women prisoners and foreign national prisoners, and to make use of the technical tools and guidance material prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in this regard, including the *Handbook on Prisoners with Special Needs*, the *Handbook on Women and Imprisonment*, and the *Handbook on the International Transfer of Sentenced Persons*.